

State Representative

Judy Clibborn

41st Legislative District

2004 Legislative Session Wrap-Up

Dear Friends,

First let me say that it has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your State Representative in my first term in the House of Representatives. I have come to rely on many of you, as well as my colleagues in the Legislature, as a source of inspiration and knowledge. My commitment to the families and communities of the 41st Legislative District kept me focused through two sessions now, including a short but extremely intense sixty day session that just ended.

I would like to thank all of you who responded to my pre-session survey. Your guidance plays an important role in how effectively I represent you in the Legislature. The results show that you want lawmakers to ensure that good-paying jobs are available, that your children receive an affordable and first-class education, and that your families are well taken care of with accessible health care.

I believe the House of Representatives answered the call. We had some great successes; unfortunately, in many cases the House faced setbacks in the Senate, where many important pieces of legislation did not pass. Nevertheless, House Democrats will remain committed to improving the economy not just for business but for all of us in Washington.

Sincerely,


Judy Clibborn



Keeping in touch

Rep. Judy Clibborn

House of Representatives
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Office: 360-786-7926

Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

Hearing impaired: 1-800-635-9993

e-mail:

clibborn_ju@leg.wa.gov

Website:

<http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/clibborn>

Legislative Assistant:

Ann Lewis
lewis_an@leg.wa.gov

Committees:

Health Care
Local Government
Transportation





Good-Paying Jobs for Washington Workers

House Democrats set out early in the '04 session to further the business-friendly climate in Washington by extending the tax incentives for high-tech companies and universities that invest heavily in research and development of new technologies. Without providing the fuel – the great minds and tools – of the new economy, the engine of our economy could falter. These exemptions help attract and keep those minds and businesses here in Washington.

Legal Protection for Employers

A personal goal of mine to help businesses resulted from conversations I had with employers in our community. One of their greatest concerns is the threat of litigation when they disclose information about an employee to a prospective employer. Likewise, businesses that are hiring need to know that information about a potential employee is an accurate reflection of their job performance. The bill I introduced would have granted employers some legal protection and the tools they need to hire the most qualified employ-

ees. It passed the House, but ultimately died in the Senate. I will continue the push for this legislation next year.

Children's Health

Washington's health care system was severely affected by challenges of recent years, as low-income families, employers of low-wage workers, and the health insurers looked to the state for a lifeline. Because health care costs are such a significant part of the state budget, all citizens, as taxpayers, were affected. Due to cuts in last year's budget, 20,000 children lost out on health coverage.

House Democrats were committed to restoring those cuts this year, and were successful in keeping Medicaid eligibility for kids at 200% of poverty level. We also successfully blocked efforts by the Senate to require co-pays for all participating families, even those far below the federal poverty level.



Our Commitment to Students

Jobs won't matter unless we have a world-class education system. We must provide greater access and funding for both K-12 and higher education in Washington to ensure that new business development and innovation continue to generate economic growth in the future. I have strongly advocated for greater investments and reforms of our Public

Education system. Some of the key pieces of legislation to pass this year help schools and students achieve the level of education necessary to compete and succeed in a global economy.

We accomplished great reforms for K-12 Education by allowing retakes of the WASL for students and increased levy capacities for school districts. In addition, a limited number of Charter Schools will be allowed under strict accountability and School Board oversight.

We also gave our colleges and universities an additional \$10 million and increased financial aid for college students by \$7 million so our students can receive the quality education they need to land jobs in the 21st century economy.

\$10 million in the budget to pay for 3,000 more enrollments at our colleges and universities.

\$7 million in enrollments so more students can earn degrees in high-demand fields like nursing, computer science, and bio-tech.

\$4.3 million in the budget for more Promise Scholarships so students afford to attend college.

Real Answers for Patients and Doctors

There was much debate this year over how best to address medical malpractice-related problems confronting health care providers and facilities in Washington State. After speaking with numerous medical practitioners and consulting with national experts, we concluded that a comprehensive approach was the only

2004 Legislative Session Wrap-Up

41st Legislative District

appropriate response to this very complex problem. There is no single entity or event that caused this problem, and there is no single solution to fix it.



At the beginning of the '04 session, House and Senate Democrats, along with Governor Locke and Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler, proposed a comprehensive package of medical malpractice reforms to tackle the three main issues:

- **Increased patient safety:** Statistics show that only five percent of medical practitioners cause most of the serious errors. Unfortunately, Washington ranks near the bottom on enforcement. If we are to solve this problem at the root cause, we must weed out those bad apples first. We can do this by improving the disciplinary policies and peer review of the health professions.
- **Malpractice insurance reform:** Steps are needed to help assure that physicians and hospitals can get the insurance they need and stabilize their insurance rates;
- **Civil justice system reform:** Malpractice litigation is complex, time-consuming and costly. Reforms are needed to reduce the number, complexity, delays and costs of these cases without surrendering the constitutional rights of patients.

The package contained eighteen bills, along with several budget items, includ-

ing an additional \$30 million for Medicaid reimbursement increases for deliveries and emergency room physicians. But nearly all of these reforms were rejected by the Senate because of one sticking point – limits on the amount of money a victim of medical negligence can receive from a jury.

I remain strongly committed to finding solutions to medical malpractice related problems. Just as doctors must treat the whole patient rather than just one symptom, I believe that this complex problem demands a comprehensive solution – patient safety, insurance reform, and civil liability reform.

Other issues of importance to the 41st



Tax Relief for Seniors

On a fixed-income, many of our state's senior citizens often find it hard to make ends meet. They should not be forced out of their homes because they cannot afford rising property taxes. Fortunately, the Legislature was able to expand senior property-tax relief to retirees with household incomes up to \$35,000. This legislation is the first expansion of senior property-tax relief in Washington State since 1998, when the current \$30,000 eligibility ceiling was enacted.



Supporting our State's Homecare Workers

I was happy the Legislature recognized the critical services homecare workers provide, by providing a fifty-cent raise for homecare workers who serve more than 20,000 elderly and vulnerable

adults in our state. Homecare workers help these individuals avoid nursing homes, which can cost our state far more than in-home care. Their work is difficult – they provide assistance for daily activities such as bathing, feeding, even moving from one room to another. Yet homecare workers often make less than they would at a restaurant or retailer. It was time to recognize them for the critical care they deliver. Homecare workers deserved this raise and any other support we can give them.



Lowering Prescription Drug Costs

In our state, consumers pay two or three times the price for the same medication they can buy in Canada. Almost eighty percent of my survey respondents believe that Washington citizens should have the right to purchase needed prescription drugs from Canada.

The House tried to give seniors and others a chance for a price break on the cost of medicines they need to stay healthy. The bill would have brought down the cost of drugs by purchasing them from Canada, at savings of up to eighty percent and would have created a website to help residents easily find medication costs and availability at Canadian pharmacies. Unfortunately, the Senate killed this bill as well, but I am committed to seeing this legislation pass next year.



Preventing and Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence

Last summer the Crystal Brame tragedy opened our eyes to the threat of domestic violence, especially among law enforcement personnel. The reaction to her death prompted concerned citizens to re-examine law enforcement policies when deal-

State Representative

Judy Clibborn

41st Legislative District

ing with one of their own accused of spousal abuse.

The Legislature worked together to pass legislation requiring law enforcement agencies to develop a set of guidelines to address domestic violence. The Legislature also passed a comprehensive package of bills to protect victims. I was the prime sponsor of one of the bills in this package, restricting police officers from carrying a weapon in a courtroom when involved in allegations of domestic violence. I am pleased that Governor Locke has recently signed this into law.

The package of legislation also allows victims of domestic violence to terminate rental agreements without paying additional rent and prohibits landlords from evicting or refusing to rent to them. In addition, the final supplemental budget includes \$2 million for domestic violence shelters. These steps ensure that we remove any barriers preventing victims of domestic violence from escaping the abuse.

Funding for the Northwest Kidney Center

The Northwest Kidney Center is a non-profit organization that provides kidney dialysis to over 1,000 patients in our state. Their clinic in Bellevue is in dire need of renovation, as it is too small and the design does not allow medics to quickly reach and transport patients when necessary. I was pleased to see that the \$300,000 for the remodel that I pushed for was included in the Capital Budget.

Insurance relief for Non-Profits

Non-profits across the state are seeing their premiums increase between 20 percent and 40 percent each year, with some claiming rate hikes at 300 percent. The nonprofit agencies most affected by these rate increases take care of our most vulnerable individuals including foster kids, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

After meeting with some local non-profit organizations that have difficulty finding affordable insurance coverage, I prime

sponsored legislation to allow them to join self-insurance pools. According to the bill, HB 1840, nonprofit corporations are granted the same authority to self-insure as are local governments, and are empowered to create joint self-insurance arrangements with them or in the private sector if they so choose. This would free them from a huge burden and allow them to keep serving our community.

I was pleased to have the Senate version of this bill pass, the risk of doing nothing could have caused jobs to be lost and cuts to vital services for our neediest neighbors.

Staying in Touch

As always, I value your thoughts and concerns on these and any other issues. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments; you can find my contact information on the front page of this newsletter. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to represent you in Olympia.

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing

**2004 Legislative
Session Wrap-Up**

State Representative
Judy Clibborn
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Printed on recycled paper

